

Winslow land donation helps connect East Coast Greenway

45 acres of land along the Kennebec River in Winslow donated by Madison Paper Industries to Kennebec-Messalonskee Trails

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WINSLOW — A donation of 45 acres of land along the Kennebec River will help connect a network of trails in the area and provide a new link to the East Coast Greenway, a 2,500-mile mostly paved trail that connects cities from Maine to Florida.



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Peter Garrett, president of the Kennebec-Messalonskee Trails, stands on the bridge abutment at the southern end of the Rotary Centennial trail in Winslow on Saturday. Land recently donated for trail use by Madison Paper Industries appears in the background, along the shore of the Kennebec River on the Winslow side.

Staff photo by Michael G. Seamans

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Most of the land, which was donated by Madison Paper Industries in Madison, will create a new park in Winslow that right now is called the Winslow Evergreen Sanctuaries.

Running along the Kennebec River, the land will connect trails from Fairfield and Benton to trails in Winslow that are part of the Kennebec-Messalonskee Trails system.

Access points for the greenway should help attract bicyclists to the trails, said Peter Garrett, president of the Kennebec Messalonskee Trails organization. It will also add to the 34 percent of the Maine greenway that is off-road, he said.

"This is a great opportunity to expand our community's assets. It's going to be a really nice place for children and parents to play," said Dennis Dacus, director of the Winslow Parks and Recreation Department.

There are already about four miles of trails in Winslow that belong to the system but are maintained by the town, said Dacus. He said he wasn't sure yet who would do the maintenance on the new trail.

Madison Paper decided to donate the land after they were approached by Peter Garrett about four years ago, said Russ Dreushel, president and CEO of Madison Paper Industries. It was formerly part of a hydropower company the mill owned, he said.

Construction hasn't started yet, but is expected to take place sometime over the summer, said Garrett. In the meantime, he said the organization plans to open the Winslow land to the public to view on June 1, National Trails Day.

The plan right now is to build eight miles of new paved trails making a continuous path from The Rotary Centennial Trail in Benton south to Winslow.

There is already a gravel road that runs through the property that will become part of the route, said Garrett. From Winslow the trails will go over the Two Cent Bridge, through Waterville, and to the Quarry Road Recreational Area.

"This link provides an opportunity for people walking, running and cycling and for those in wheelchairs to go off roads," said Garrett.

The trail system was first built in 2004 as a project of the Waterville Rotary and the Kennebec River Trail Committee. The Rotary Centennial Trail was completed in 2005, and part of the system was incorporated into the greenway in 2006. There are trails in Benton, Fairfield, Oakland, Waterville and Winslow.

The new trails are an important milestone for the organization because their completion will connect all five towns.

"We've been hoping to include this piece in our trail network for several years. It's all coming together now," Garrett said.

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